

VZCZCXRO3516

OO RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHGI RUEHJS RUEHKUK RUEHLH

RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHTRO

DE RUEHRB #0879/01 3021343

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

O 291343Z OCT 09

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0785

INFO RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0457

RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0238

RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 3582

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 RABAT 000879

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KPAL IS MO

SUBJECT: DAY ONE OF RABAT INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON
JERUSALEM HIGHLIGHTS FRUSTRATION WITH THE NETANYAHU
GOVERNMENT

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The October 28 and 29 Rabat International Forum on Jerusalem brought together senior Quartet and Muslim representatives. Moroccan Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri opened the conference with a message from King Mohammed VI, calling on the international community to pressure Israel to end oppression. Palestinian Authority President Abbas excluded any meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu "for the moment." Characterizing the morning as having been dominated by "fear," Fassi Fihri subsequently chaired a spirited two-hour meeting with Ministers, Ambassadors and other senior representatives of the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Jordan, Russia, Senegal, Sweden, Turkey, the European Union, and the United States. UN Envoy Serry and the Palestinian top diplomat warned that continuing evictions and demolitions were making matters worse. Eloquent Jordanian Foreign Minister Judeh emphasized that the Arab Peace Initiative remained on the table. Participants generally praised President Obama's efforts and universally decried Israeli demolitions, building and "non-negotiation." The Ambassador urged that the parties give the U.S. time to conduct quiet negotiations.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On October 28, Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Taieb Fassi Fihri opened the two-day International Forum on Jerusalem by reading a message from King Mohammed VI, the Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference's (OIC's) Al Quds or Jerusalem Committee. The king's message called on the international community to pressure Israel to stop oppressing Palestinians, return to the negotiating table, comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions, respect previous agreements, and find a just, final and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The King also decried Israel's settlement and demolition policies. He also reiterated Morocco's support for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who also spoke. Fassi Fihri urged Palestinians to work together.

¶3. (U) In his address and comments to the media, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas excluded any meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu "for the moment." Abbas insisted on negotiations based on the 1967 borders; a settlement freeze; and, for a final settlement, agreement on Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, borders, water, security and detainees.

¶4. (U) Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa, UNSYG Envoy Robert Serry, and Yasser Arafat Foundation President Nasser Al-Qudwa also spoke at the opening session of the conference jointly organized by the Institute and the Bayt Mal Al Qods Agency. Serry delivered remarks on behalf of UNSYG Ban ki-Moon.

¶5. (SBU) In the afternoon, Minister Fassi Fihri chaired a two-hour meeting with the Foreign Ministers of Jordan and Senegal, the Palestinian Authority's chief diplomat, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc, and representatives of Egypt, Russia, Sweden, the European Union, and the United States, with most of the ambassadors of those entities present. Fassi Fihri explained that what had once been a concern of just the Arab League had become the Organization of the Islamic Conference's issue. He stressed that the conference was designed to assess the situation in the Middle East. Fassi Fihri emphasized that "fear" had been the common denominator in the morning session. He stressed that the issue facing the international community is stopping the settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank. The Minister also underscored that East Jerusalem must be the capital of an independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian state. He noted that many countries stood ready to recognize the independence of such a state, but they were waiting for a signal from the Quartet.

¶6. (SBU) UN Envoy Serry characterized the present

RABAT 00000879 002 OF 003

situation as "serious." He warned that continuing evictions and demolitions were making matters worse.

¶7. (SBU) Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh said that in spite of Israeli provocations, the Arab Peace Initiative remained on the table. He noted that Jordan's peace agreement with Israel was 15 years and two days old, but today there was too much "process" and not enough "peace." Praising the Quartet's New York and Trieste statement and President Obama's UN General Assembly address, the Minister said the speech offered clear terms of reference.

¶8. (SBU) Russian First Vice Minister Alexander Saltanov was the next to highlight the sensitivity of issues related to Jerusalem. He said that the Russian Orthodox Church's decision to reunify led many Russians to visit East Jerusalem, and many Russian Muslims also go there seeking access to Muslim holy sites. Speaking personally, Saltonov said that the real question was how the international community could help Prime Minister Netanyahu to help himself and Senator Mitchell. Saltanov also called on the Quartet to meet more regularly and at all levels. The Jordanian summarized the Russian intervention as asking, "How does one bypass the impasse?"

¶9. (SBU) The passionate Palestinian chief negotiator then produced a map of Jerusalem and explained that Netanyahu is implementing a plan to reduce the Arab population in East Jerusalem from the current 32 percent to 12 percent by 2020. Stressing Netanyahu's plan to build 610 houses in East Jerusalem in 2009, 623 in 2010, and 643 in 2011, he said that the settlement freeze failed to include East Jerusalem or public buildings. He asserted that 37 percent of all Israeli building is in East Jerusalem and that East Jerusalem's Jewish population has increased by 26 percent. What is left for a Palestinian state? Phase One of the Road

Map has been effectively cancelled, and incursions continued. Labeling Netanyahu "honest, decisive and to-the-point," he said negotiations could not resume under these conditions. He added that Palestinians are in East Jerusalem to stay, but their only avenue might be to abandon the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution. He condemned the practice of protecting Israel in the Security Council. He called the conference a defining moment as the situation was "very critical." He warned that the path ahead was dark and that Marines could not change that, nor could they keep people from becoming suicide bombers or from supporting Usama bin Laden. He closed by asking those present to be truly pro-peace and to promote a fair agreement.

¶10. (SBU) The EU Special Envoy for the Middle East said he had not come to Rabat to admit defeat. Moral and political clarity were needed. International law must be the guiding principle. The Israeli settlements were illegal. Acknowledging the [Palestinian] right to housing, he appealed for tolerance and rationality.

¶11. (SBU) Declaring that Jerusalem was an extremely sensitive and difficult issue, Swedish Deputy Foreign Minister Robert Rydberg expressed appreciation for Morocco's organization of this timely gathering. He called for a genuine freeze on settlements. He said the political and humanitarian situations in Gaza remained unacceptable. He warned of the risk that the final settlement negotiations were being pre-empted.

¶12. (SBU) The Egyptian Vice Minister was brief. He said Egypt supported U.S. efforts. He emphasized that Egypt was concerned about Israeli pre-conditions and about human rights.

¶13. (SBU) The Ambassador was the last scheduled speaker. He acknowledged the sincere pain, despair and anguish he had heard. He underscored that he

RABAT 00000879 003 OF 003

agreed with President Obama, and he assured his listeners of the president's sincere commitment to Middle East peace. The Ambassador noted that Secretary Clinton and Special Envoy Mitchell brought great experience to the peace process and completed a team that was perhaps unmatched in history. He emphasized the shortness of time which President Obama's Administration has had to address an issue that was decades old. Citing his own experience as a negotiator, he appealed for patience as quiet negotiations were conducted.

¶14. (SBU) The Jordanian and the Palestinian then piped up again. The Jordanian praised the president's sincerity and engagement. He argued that Mitchell's mission was to create a conducive environment for negotiations. However, when one talked about no pre-conditions, that did not mean that Israel had a license to keep building. "Settlements are illegal and illegitimate. Both sides must refrain from actions that prejudice final status negotiations."

¶15. (SBU) The Palestinian opined that there was a difference between a tough negotiator and a non-negotiator. "Palestinians have no quarrel with President Obama. The time has come to move from "What is possible?" to "What is needed?" He appealed to the international community to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Palestinians, who were now suffering indignities that Black South Africans never suffered under apartheid. "Nothing is more

difficult than being Palestinian." One is not even allowed to use certain roads if one is not Jewish. "Fences make good neighbors." The international community must now make the right choices.

¶16. (SBU) Minister Fassi Fihri closed the meeting by saying that he was unhappy with the unbalanced draft declaration. He urged all participants to work on the draft and to study the issue of pre-conditions in particular.

KAPLAN